

democratic United Europe, but, absent that possibility, he both hoped and predicted that the Soviet system would implode.

Orwell's personality was angular and occasionally intolerant (he disliked homosexuality, perhaps after a painful experience at school), but nobody who knew him can recall his doing anything mean or base. Meyers adds to my knowledge (at least) of Orwell's relationships with women: He was far more amorous, and somewhat more successful, than most people knew at the time. This cost him something morally in guilt about his devoted first wife, Eileen O'Shaughnessy, who died during a routine operation. And toward the end, when he was desperately ill and believed that remarriage might prolong his life, he virtually proposed to certain women that they might like to become his official widow. This makes painful reading, even if a certain dignity does diminish the pathos. It also prompts the question: Has such a gambit ever worked? In Orwell's case, it did. When he was on his deathbed, the glamorous but sinister Sonia Brownell agreed to become his wife. It was she who tyrannized researchers and potential biographers and anthologists for many years, before expiring as a thwarted and embittered boozier in a shabby Parisian exile. The pall that she threw over "Orwell studies" for so long has now been definitively lifted.

But I doubt that we need to know much more than we do. Orwell's short and intense life has for years borne witness to

some of those verities of which we were already aware. Parties and churches and states cannot be honest, but individuals can. Real books cannot be written by machines or committees. The truth is not always easy to discern, but a lie can and must be called by its right name. And the imagination, like certain wild animals, as Orwell himself once put it, will not breed in captivity. Actually, that last metaphor is beautiful but inaccurate. Even in the most dire conditions, there is a human will to resist coercion. We must believe that even now in North Korea, there are ideas alive inside human brains that were not put there by any authority.

In *The Captive Mind* (1953), Czeslaw Milosz wrote of his astonishment at discovering that the author of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which he had read in a samizdat edition, had never lived under totalitarian rule. Oh, but he had—in a hermetic and nasty school, and in the precincts of a colonial jail, and in the curfewed streets of Barcelona. It doesn't dilute Milosz's compliment to say that, by a sheer power of facing reality, Orwell was able to distill literature as well as great polemic from the experiences. His very ordinariness is the sterling guarantee that we need no saintly representative consciences. We would do better to make sterner use of our own.

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America's Jewish Wars

JEW VS. JEW:

The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry.

By Samuel G. Freedman. Simon & Schuster.

397 pp. \$26

Reviewed by Tova Reich

The First Temple was destroyed in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. because of idolatry, fornication, and bloodshed, according to the Talmud, and the Second Temple was

destroyed six centuries later because of *sinat hinam*, hatred without cause. Baseless hatred, then, is the equal of the other three destructive forces. Its consequences can be dire indeed.

Sinat hinam is an overarching theme of Samuel G. Freedman's book about divisiveness and rancor within the American Jewish community. Freedman, a former *New York Times* reporter who teaches at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, sometimes translates the Hebrew phrase correctly as "groundless hatred" and other times incorrectly as "pure hatred." Pure hatred, though, may be easier to comprehend than groundless hatred, which almost never exists, at least from the point of view of the hater. Certainly the antagonists Freedman depicts hate one another not gratuitously but for what they firmly believe to be good reasons.

Pursuing, as he puts it in soft, post-Holocaust terms, "a peculiarly Jewish mission, the mission of bearing witness," Freedman reports on "the struggle for the soul of American Jewry." The outcome, he believes, is already clear: "The Orthodox model has triumphed." In an America where anti-Semitism has been effectively rendered marginal, the domain of crackpots and outcasts, an America that has taken in its Jews and absorbed them with remarkable generosity of spirit, unprecedented in any other time or place, "Jewish secularism was not defeated as much as it was loved to death." Thus, "except for religion, Jews had little to hold onto that made them feel like Jews."

To support this thesis, the author adopts a currently popular genre that straddles sociology and journalism: case studies, which he calls "parables," presumably because each illustrates a clear point. Each of the six studies is brought to life through a narrative of the history and experience of one or two individuals, in the manner of a lengthy magazine feature. The New York story, for example, focuses on Sharon Levine, a long-time camper at the secular Labor-Zionist Camp Kinderwelt in the Catskills, and juxtaposes the camp's demise with the flourishing of Kiryas Joel, a fundamentalist community of Hasidim two miles down the road. When the mayor of Kiryas Joel is told that such a place as Kinderwelt once existed nearby but folded, he is not surprised. "Secular Judaism is failure," he says.

From Denver, Freedman brings back a story of a failed attempt to reconcile the three branches of Judaism—Orthodox, Conserv-

ative, and Reform—over the divisive issue of conversion. (The issue is known as "Who is a Jew?" in Israel, where it is truly explosive, involving citizenship rights and an array of civil privileges.) The lesson learned from the Denver experiment, as one of the actors in the drama observes, is that "it's erroneous to build the idea of Jewish unity on religious or ideological compromise."

Freedman also relates the miserable tale of Harry Shapiro, a disturbed Orthodox political right-winger on Israel, now sitting in jail for planting a bomb in a Jewish community center in Florida where Shimon Peres, one of the architects of the Oslo Peace Accords, was scheduled to speak. The point, according to Freedman, is that "America's doves on the whole did not care about Israel as deeply as did its hawks." The implication is that the same intensity of conviction applies to religious matters as well, and that those who care the most will do whatever seems necessary to prevail.

In New Haven, Connecticut, Freedman examines the case of the Yale Five, the Orthodox Jewish students who filed suit seeking a waiver from the requirement that they live in college dormitories. He approaches the case by tracing the religious trajectory of the father of one of the plaintiffs in his rightward movement from Modern Orthodoxy, with its ideology of bridging observance and participation in worldly life, to the more insular, fundamentalist practice of the ultra-Orthodox Haredim. The case has managed to offend almost all secularists, as well as the many Orthodox Jews who see in it contempt for their manner of observance. As Freedman notes, "The hidden issue of the Yale Five case, to be found nowhere in the legal documents, was who established the definition of Jewish, and more specifically Orthodox, authenticity."

Of the six parables, three represent victories for the Orthodox. The Yale case is still in the courts; and, though the liberal or left wing may have triumphed in the remaining two, they are qualified successes at best. In Beachwood, Ohio, secular Jews succeeded in preventing the construction of an Orthodox campus in their suburb, but that is small consolation, as one of the leaders of the winning side understands only too well: "He had won for now, but he would lose in the end. Of that he was certain."

Perhaps the most interesting case is feminist Rachel Adler's ultimately successful campaign, in her egalitarian congregation in Los Angeles, to incorporate a reference to the matriarchs of the Jewish people into one of the most revered prayers in the liturgy, the Amidah. Those opposing the change believed that such a deviation from tradition, in which only the patriarchs are mentioned, would alienate them from the shared worship of the Jewish community. The struggle in Los Angeles, unlike the others that Freedman chronicles, represents on both sides "a drive toward deeper observance rather than away from it." In addition, it reflects a clash between identity groups within Judaism—in this case, feminism and Orthodoxy—that, in turn, mirrors similar clashes within American culture as a whole.

Feminism is just one of many cultural forces affecting American Jews, yet Freedman mostly limits himself to the Jewish scene, and for that matter to a relative minority within that scene, with little reference to the larger context within which these forces also play themselves out. The movement to the right by those drawn to ritual observance within Judaism, for example, can be attributed to specific factors, such as the influx into the United States of rabbinical scholars and seminarians in the wake of the Holocaust, as Freedman notes. But it is also part of a rightward, fundamentalist trend worldwide, in Islam and Christianity as well as in Judaism. Purity of observance has become the gold standard to which more and more religiously inclined souls aspire. The development may be traced to a general longing for spirituality and community in an age of technology and materialism, an age leveled and coarsened by globalization and the media.

Moreover, the increased visibility and assertiveness of Orthodox Jews is not merely a product of the sense of security and comfort Jews feel in America. It is also part of a larger picture, a legacy perhaps of the 1960s, of the civil rights movement, of the emergence and coming-out-of-the-closet of all kinds of ethnic and interest groups. Even Jews are subject to such influences, with "Jewish pride" reaching its apogee this year in the heretofore unimaginable vice-presidential nomination

of Joseph Lieberman, not just a Jew but an openly observant Modern Orthodox Jew.

There is an uneasy balance in this book. At times, Freedman accepts the discord among American Jews as the normal struggle of an evolving community. He concedes early on that Jews have been a contentious lot from the days of the Golden Calf (he could have gone back even further). Jews just don't get along; it's an old story. By the end of the book, he very sensibly posits a realignment of the interested parties in this contemporary American-Jewish struggle. The Haredim emerge triumphant and set the religious standard. A group he calls "Conservadox" combines the present-day Modern Orthodox with the traditional wing of the Conservative movement. The "Reformative" comprises the left wing of the old Conservative camp and those Reform Jews drawn toward more traditional practice. All the rest, finally, he calls "Just Jews." The implication is that such shifts in alliance are a natural outcome of an ongoing, even healthy effort to adjust to new realities—nothing to get alarmed about.

Elsewhere, though, Freedman surrenders to an almost apocalyptic mode, writing of a "civil war" that "reached its most furious pitch in the final years of the millennium." Looming here is the dark cloud of *sinat hinam*, and everything the rabbis, who wrote the book and controlled the spin, claimed that groundless hatred engenders. Had Freedman focused on the religious battles in Israel, it might have been believable that dissension could lead to calamity. In America, however, the prospect is far less convincing, not least because, according to a recent study, the Jews who are at the center of Freedman's work, the ones who care about any form of ritual practice at all, probably constitute only about 30 percent of the American Jewish community.

Nor is it news that the most rigidly observant are emerging triumphant. Whether it suits us or not, the survival of the Jewish people over the generations can probably be credited to the Orthodox hard core. *Compromise* is not a word in their lexicon.

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